Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde Art from the Periphery
Author(s): Partha Mitter
Source: *The Art Bulletin*, Dec., 2008, Vol. 90, No. 4 (Dec., 2008), pp. 531-548
Published by: CAA
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/20619633

REFERENCES
Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:
https://www.jstor.org/stable/20619633?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents
You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at https://about.jstor.org/terms

CAA is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Art Bulletin*

This content downloaded from
200.144.202.53 on Mon, 14 Mar 2022 17:37:01 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Interventions: Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde Art from the Periphery

Partha Mitter

With the collapse of earlier certainties, the last two decades have witnessed serious soul-searching among art historians about the future of the discipline. This is strikingly expressed by Hans Belting in two of his theoretical works—one with the melancholy title *The End of the History of Art?*—accepting the demise of art history as a grand Hegelian narrative.[1] There is, he points out, a progressive disjunction between the awareness of the enormous diversity of art forms and practices and the narrow focus of canonical art histories. However, his fear that the canon looks increasingly vulnerable may be somewhat premature. Take, for instance, *Art since 1900*, the magisterial volume on the avant-garde published in 2004. The book raises immensely important questions that demand engagement. The four authors display intellectual sophistication, an exemplary attention to detail, and a masterly grasp of the broader picture of Western avant-garde art in the twentieth century.[2] Because of its importance, the work has been reviewed widely and its underlying arguments scrutinized and dismantled, raising a great many urgent critical and historical issues relevant to our times. I think we must recognize the advances made by this work, which brings into question the triumphalist discourse of modernism in the opening decades of the twentieth century. It should further be acknowledged that a wide-ranging text of this sort for a general readership cannot hope to include everything.

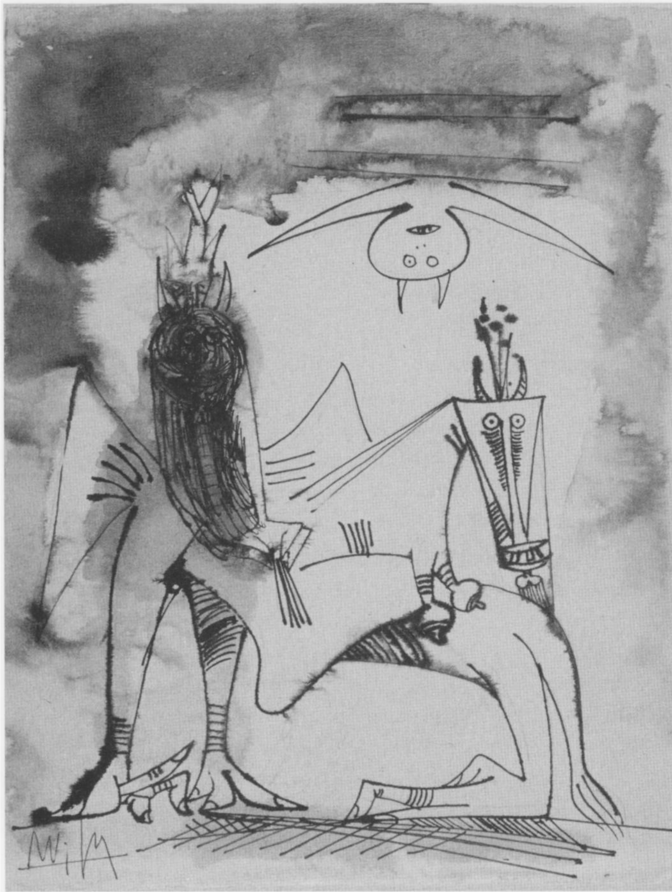
Nonetheless, perhaps because my own work has dealt with artists in the periphery, I would have liked to have seen the authors filling more of the gaps in our knowledge of world art. The book contains few references to notable artists living outside Europe and the United States who have made significant contributions to the global processes of modernity. It would have been desirable to see even a brief mention of artists such as Jamini Roy (1887–1972), whose innovative formalism based on a primitivist reimagining of the folk art of India powerfully mediated between the global and the local; the savage, spiky images of the Mexican primitivist Wifredo Lam (1902–1982, Fig. 1); the amoebic shapes of the Brazilian avant-garde painter Tarsila do Amaral (1886–1973); and, more recently, Everlyn Nicodemus's profoundly moving representations of global genocide (Fig. 2) and the expansive work of African artists shown at *Africa Remix*, a recent exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London.[3]

The Mexican muralists are discussed, but one could run the danger of concluding from this volume that except for this major movement, there has been no worthwhile art of political resistance in the non-Western world, notwithstanding significant artistic expressions in Asia and Africa of cultural resistance to Western dominance. My latest book, *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922–1947*, and my previous work, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850–1922*, for instance, chart the complex relation between modernity, art, and cultural resistance in colonial India.[4] *Art since 1900* touches on a few isolated samples of postwar diaspora art and Asian avant-garde movements, but these owe their presence more to what they mean to the West than for their intrinsic worth. In consequence, they tend to come off as bit players in the master narrative. Thus, despite the above inclusions, the canon is not significantly enlarged. Rather, the non-Western artists are brought in primarily on account of their compatibility with the avant-garde discourse in the West.

This is not to discount the book's very wide range of topics. Among its considerable merits is that, within the parameters of its own definition of modernism, it rigorously documents the internal debates in the West on the predicament of modernity, mapping successfully its complex, dialogic, oppositional, and agonistic agenda, foregrounding its intellectual wherewithal, such as psychoanalysis, social history of art, formalism, structuralism, and poststructuralism. It will consequently remain a valuable document to the last century's insider-outsider politics of modernism from the Euro-American perspective. I point this out only because the authors in fact distance themselves from the hollow universalism of the colonial period, as expressed in Hal Foster's admirable attempts to negotiate "between diverse cultural space-times."[5] However, since the authors aim to deal with "art" as a universal category, readers will inevitably demand much of these scholars—who inspired a generation of students in exposing the knowledge-power nexus of twentieth-century modernism.[6] For this reason, none of the issues raised here would be problematic if the title of the book were, for instance, *Western Avant-Garde Art since 1900* or *Western Art since 1900.*

The book's wider global ambitions nonetheless offer me a starting point to situate its "universalist" canon within an epistemological framework that goes back to the Enlightenment. The book follows a well-trodden path that equates Western norms with global values, having the unintended consequence of excluding the art of the periphery. Take the example of a recent standard history of world photography: not a single Chinese, Indian, or African photographer features in it, not, for instance, the stunning color photographs of Raghubir Singh (Fig. 3), nor the elegant black-and-white studio portraits of the African photographer Seydou Keïta, whose work could well compare with that of August Sander.[7] Similarly, the work of the Indian-Hungarian Amrita Sher-Gil, a highly original woman painter who worked in the context of global modernism, is generally written out of world histories of women artists (Fig. 4).[8] Such faith in the universal is not unique to art history, though it creates its own specific inclusions. Take the world of fashion. We are led to believe

This content downloaded from
200.144.202.53 on Mon, 14 Mar 2022 17:37:01 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms



1 Wifredo Lam, untitled, 1946, ink on paper, 12¼ × 9½ in. (31 × 24 cm). Private collection (artwork © Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York; photograph © Banque d'Images, ADAGP, provided by Art Resource, New York)

that today it embraces with enthusiasm all ethnic groups in an unprecedented expansion of the canon of beauty. Yet what comes across is the fact that representations of multiethnic supermodels are homogenized within the prevailing Western classical framework of beauty.[9] Looking at economics, we see that models of development, based on a Western definition of well-being, are presented as a panacea to the developing world irrespective of the values and needs of specific regions. I use these analogies merely to demonstrate the pervasive hold of "hegemonic" universality.[10]

Despite its serious intentions, the "universalist" project of art history remains trapped within the constraints of Western epistemology, which cannot be remedied simply by a culturally determined self-reflexivity. The wide acceptance of the Western modernist canon as self-evidently universal (even in non-Western regions, I must add) does not give sufficient weight to the role of convention in artistic production.[11] In the social sciences, this use of the universal for the specific is described as an unmarked case. Modernism in this sense is an "unmarked case" that implicitly stands for "Western" modernism. By this token, a qualifying epithet becomes necessary to speak of any other: East European modernism, Chinese modernism, Indian modernism, and so on.[12] It is perhaps no accident that following Immanuel Kant's a priori view of aesthetics, the concept "art" is often regarded as neutral and disinterested, which systematically ignores the implications of race, gender, sexual orientation, and even class (by the latter I mean all forms of folk and popular art that are excluded from the master narrative). The universal canon of art subsumes either the classical canon or the modernist canon that supplanted it in the twentieth century.

The Shock of the New

The embedded hierarchy implied by the modernist canon and its impact on contemporary art of regions regarded as the cultural periphery can be understood only in historical terms. In the late nineteenth century, the modernist revolution began to alter European sensibilities, gradually spreading to other regions throughout the twentieth, shaping global perceptions of contemporary art and literature, a transformation that has left few societies untouched.[13] Imagine the profound shock on first encountering Pablo Picasso's *Les demoiselles d'Avignon*, or the frisson given by Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*, a porcelain urinal signed R. Mutt. Even from this distance in time, we can still sense the dislocation and bewilderment with which the general public greeted these radical assaults on their vision and sensibility. Nor is it difficult to be impressed by the radical outlook of the early Cubists, Expressionists, and Surrealists, who declared war on bourgeois values and bourgeois artistic models, the portentous *pompiers peintres* of the Victorian era.

Adrian Stokes argues that *The Bathers* by Paul Cézanne, which inspired Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, encouraged artists to turn to African sculpture in repudiation of classical taste. This prompts him to speculate "in the most far-fetched manner whether one day it will be possible to claim for *The Bathers* that it is among the first and perhaps the greatest works of a deeply founded cosmopolitan art which was to pre-figure the eventual evolution of a multi-racial society."[14] Surrealism, with its distaste for colonial rule, enjoyed a mutually beneficial cross-fertilization with black cultural resistance, as suggested by the friendship between André Breton and the Martinique poet and intellectual Aimé Césaire.[15] Indeed, it is only in the liberal atmosphere of bohemian Paris that the creative genius of the black chanteuse Josephine Baker could flourish, the Jazz Age and "negrophilia" helping to release Europe from its sterile exclusivity. Today the preeminence of modernist art is universally assured, as its controlling canon and market mechanism hold the so-called peripheries in its thrall or in its grip, depending on one's point of view. Even postmodern and postcolonial thinking, which arose partly in revolt against the avant-garde in the twilight years of the last century, was a child of this worldwide movement, though a child in revolt against some of its fundamental tenets. These enormous achievements of the heroic age of the avant-garde cannot be gainsaid, as the modernist technology of art, not to mention the formal language and syntax of Cubism, allowed artists in far-flung regions to devise new ways to image the visible world. One of the favorite projects of the colonial powers in the nineteenth century was to inculcate "good taste" in the subject nations through the introduction of academic naturalism and classical standards.[16] Therefore, the revolt of the Western avant-garde against academic naturalism and its attendant ideology was openly welcomed by the subject nations, who were concerned with formulating their own resistance to the colonial order.

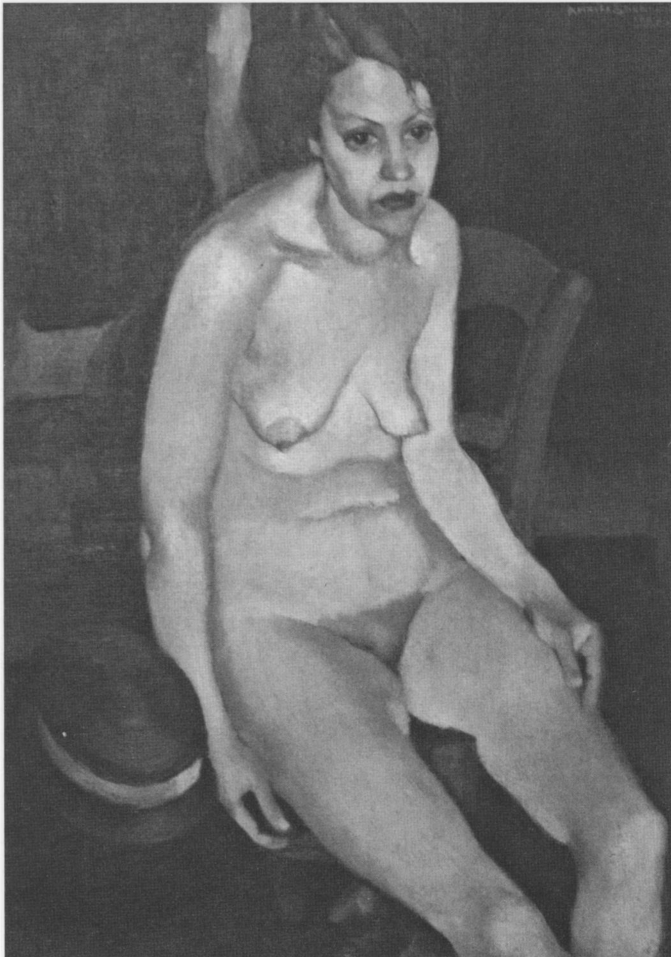
This content downloaded from
200.144.202.53 on Mon, 14 Mar 2022 17:37:01 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

2 Everlyn Nicodemus, *Reference Scroll on Genocide, Massacres and Ethnic Cleansing,* 2004, installation view, 198 Gallery, Brixton, U.K., 2006 (artwork © Everlyn Nicodemus; photograph by Isabelle Pateer)

Above all, modernism's experimental attitude that constantly sought to push intellectual frontiers, its ideology of emancipatory innovation, and its agonistic relation to tradition and authority released new energies in artists raised in a more traditional mode. In short, its revolutionary message furnished ammunition for cultural resistance to colonial empires, as each colonized nation deployed the language of modernism to fight its own particular cultural corner. In the

3 Raghubir Singh, *Pedestrians, Kemp's Corner, Mumbai,* 1989, color photograph (artwork © Succession Raghubir Singh)

This content downloaded from 200.144.202.53 on Mon, 14 Mar 2022 17:37:01 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms



4 Amrita Sher-Gil, *The Professional Model*, 1933, oil on canvas, 39⅜ × 28⅜ in. (100 × 72 cm). National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi (artwork in the public domain)

Indian Empire, for instance, the nationalist artists asserted their own cultural identity against the colonial-capitalist complex.[17]

Non-Western nations were no less persuaded by the Western theorists' critical engagement within modernism that kept it on its toes, so to speak, preventing it from becoming complacent and formulaic in the aftermath of its public acceptance. Marxists have taken the lead in interrogating the troubled relation between modernity and tradition, between the social usefulness of art and the avant-garde aesthetics of autonomy, and between high art and the mass culture of consumption in capitalist societies. Walter Benjamin's idea of mechanical reproducibility helped undermine the "aura" of originality in modernist innovations, while Carl Einstein's primitivism sought to restore the symbolic dimension of collective life within the avant-garde. In 1939, in answer to the Soviet critics' condemnation of bourgeois formalism, Clement Greenberg deployed the very same Marxian critical apparatus to defend the modernist aesthetics of autonomy against kitsch; he provided a fresh definition of the avant-garde as a historical agency that resisted the consumer culture of capitalist society.[18]

The instrumentalist explanation of the social meaning of art as a reflection of class-consciousness and ideology was replaced by a new generation of critical historians of art led by T. J. Clark (and indirectly inspired by Meyer Schapiro) with a more nuanced "against the grain" interpretation of artistic creation, which stressed the instability of ideologies and the complex relation of artists to the totality of a historical situation.[19] Repudiating a simplistic polarity of high and low art, Thomas Crow posits a dialogic relation between high art and the leisure industry of market capitalism, in which "advanced artists make unsettling equations between high and low, which dislocate the apparently fixed terms of that hierarchy into new and persuasive configurations. . . ."[20] In an essay, Rosalind Krauss explores Auguste Rodin's production of multiple copies to challenge the much-vaunted originality of the modernists.[21] Hal Foster offers us two influential formulations of postmodernism—one that is complicit with capitalism and the other as a form of resistance to it, his own work eloquently articulating the latter position.[22]

The Picasso Manqué Syndrome

These critical interventions by Clark, Krauss, and others have been of seminal importance in tempering the triumphalism of the avant-garde, highlighting the fractures and contradictions of modernity and its complex relation with tradition, all of which have, of course, inspired art practices not only in the center but also in the periphery. However, as argued by David Craven, critical interventions of major thinkers from the periphery in art history are lacking, which by their absence contribute to the erasure of nonmetropolitan art practices within the "universalist" canon.[23] The discipline of art history has yet to change in any substantive manner the implicit evaluation of non-Western modernism as derivative and devoid of originality. Two cases highlight, for instance, the glaring difference in art historical assessments of the use of material from a culture outside one's own. The first is the exhibition *"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, held in New York in 1985, and the critical interventions surrounding the exhibition; the second is what I call the Picasso manqué syndrome.

"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art was an impressive exhibition mounted at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (Fig. 5). Its goal was to highlight the formal similarities between ethnographic art and Western modernism. The exhibition, which sought to overcome the "debased" notion of causal influence by treating ethnographic objects as possessing aesthetic merit, described the "primitive" motifs in the works of Picasso and other iconic modernists as a reflection of the "affinities" between modern and "tribal" art that transcended time and space.[24] Among its reviews, Foster's and James Clifford's stand out for laying bare the contradictions of this ambitious curatorial exercise. Foster focused on the show's anodyne formalist juxtaposition of the tribal and the modern and its attempts to assimilate tribal culture to Enlightenment values. Such an approach, he showed us, had the effect of reducing primitivism's disruptive potentials, its raw power as a fetishistic discourse, which the Surrealists had exploited brilliantly.[25] The anthropologist Clifford commented on the exhibition's erasure of colonial violence, which had wrenched African and Oceanic objects from their social contexts for display in European museums, by its projection of a neutral formalist "allegory of affinities."[26]

For me it is quite telling that the organizers of *"Primitivism"*

This content downloaded from
200.144.202.53 on Mon, 14 Mar 2022 17:37:01 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

5 *"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern,* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1984, installation view (digital image © The Museum of Modern Art/licensed by SCALA, provided by Art Resource, NY; *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* © Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York)

in 20th Century Art wished to underline the fact that the artistic "borrowings" of Picasso and other modernists from simple "primitive" cultures did not amount to a debt to these societies. On the contrary, the European "discovery" of ethnographic art redeemed these fetishist objects for the modern world and elevated them to the level of high art.[27] Importantly, the New York exhibition was at pains to emphasize that the selected pairings of modern and tribal objects demonstrated the common denominators of these arts that were independent of direct influence.[28]

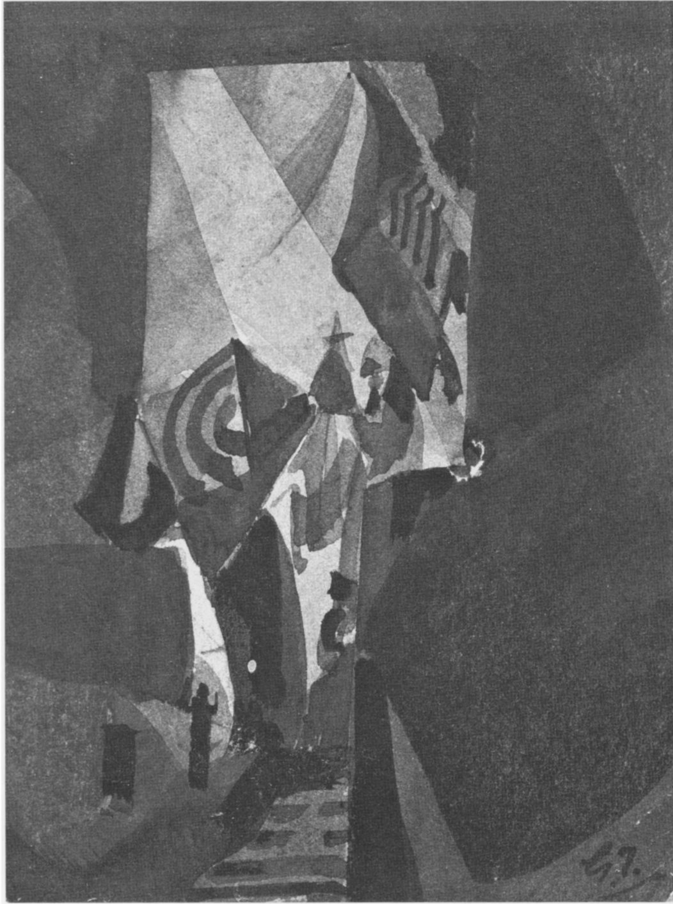
What is crucial to realize is that Picasso's borrowings from "simple" ethnographic objects in no way compromised his cultural integrity as an artist. A noted authority, writing a decade later on Vladimir Tatlin's discovery of a tribal mask in Picasso's studio, could thus exclaim that "it is one of the wonders of our age that such a simple tribal artifact, which could justifiably be called primitive, should have given birth indirectly to Russian Constructivism, one of the most technically visionary of all twentieth-century art movements."[29]

As opposed to appropriations by the Western avant-garde, let us now see what happens to the artist as a colonial subject who responds to an intellectual product of the "dominant" European culture.[30] The widely held view that modern art beyond Europe and the United States is at best a derivative exercise reflects the implicit assertion of the "intellectual property rights" of the West.[31] In 1959, the English art historian William George Archer published *India and Modern Art*, which remains a classic example of colonialist art history. Even though the work was written nearly half a century ago, I believe its underlying assumptions about the lack of originality of non-Western modernism continue to be symptomatic of a widespread bias. Archer posed a pertinent question: Can modern art be appropriated by Indians, and if so, in what manner? In answer to this, he provided a succinct analysis of the paintings made between 1921 and 1928 by the pioneering Indian modernist Gaganendranath Tagore (1867–1938), who was among the first Indian painters to adapt the revolutionary syntax of Cubism (Fig. 6). Archer claimed that such appropriation must be "absorbed into the blood stream" of that society to be a genuine item. But as the next defining passage makes clear, this had failed miserably in the case of the Indian artist:

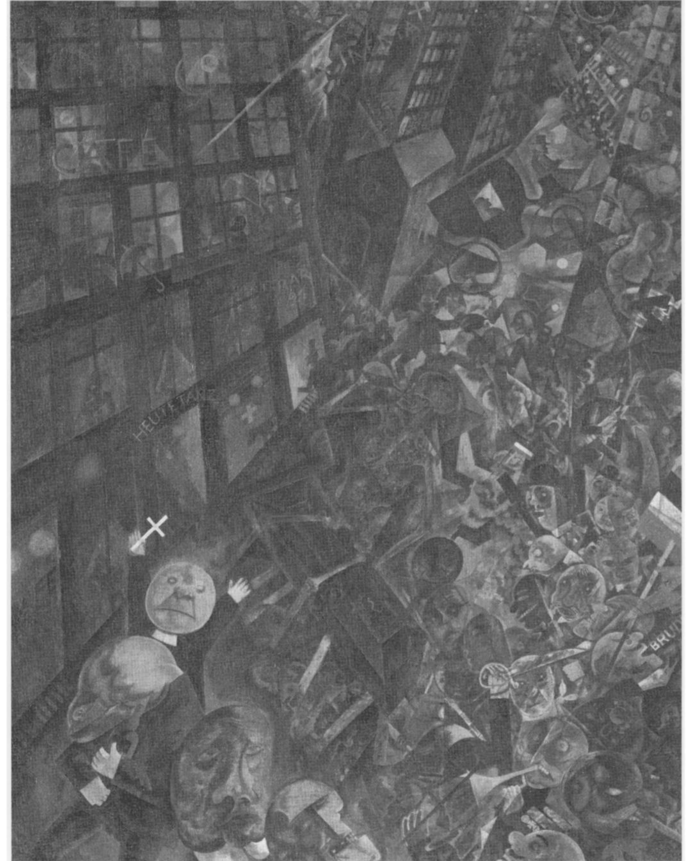
> His style was, at first sight, not unlike the early followers of Braque and Picasso. . . . Yet apart from their very evident lack of power—a power which in some mysterious way was present in the work of Braque and Picasso—Gogonendranath's pictures were actually no more than stylised illustrations . . . weak as art, but what was more important, they were un-Indian. . . . As a result, his pictures, despite their modernistic manner, had an air of trivial irrelevance.[32]

Elsewhere I have contended that Archer failed to comprehend the Indian artist's achievement in deploying the flexible syntax of Cubism in order to create miniature watercolors of poetic intensity that were meaningful in the colonial-nationalist milieu of India.[33] Let me explain. Analytic Cubism, which destroyed the conventions of illusionistic naturalism, helped to restore the internal cohesion of a picture so that it ceased to be a window on the external world.[34] Artists worldwide were drawn to Cubism's flexible nonfigurative syntax, which could be put to different uses, but they were not concerned with the formal revolution of Analytic Cubism as such. To take an example pertinent to my argument, the motivation behind the Western Expressionists Franz Marc (Fig. 7), Lyonel Feininger, or Georg Grosz (Fig. 8) and the Indian artist Gaganendranath was analogous: objects could be distorted and fragmented to produce dazzling patterns. Although they shared this formal language, the specific cultural contexts of the Central European artists and Gaganen-

This content downloaded from
200.144.202.53 on Mon, 14 Mar 2022 17:37:01 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms



6 Gaganendranath Tagore, *A Cubist Scene*, ca. 1923, watercolor on postcard, 4½ × 3⅜ in. (11.5 × 8.5 cm). Private collection (artwork in the public domain)



8 George Grosz, *The Funeral, Dedicated to Oskar Panizza* (*Der Leichenzug, Widmung an Oskar Panizza*), 1917–18, oil on canvas, 55 × 43⅜ in. (140 × 110 cm). Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart (artwork © Estate of George Grosz/licensed by VAGA, New York, NY; photograph by Erich Lessing, provided by Art Resource, NY)

7 Franz Marc, *Two Horses*, 1911–12, watercolor and black ink on paper, 82¼ × 56¼ in. (209 × 143 cm). Kunsthalle, Hamburg (artwork in the public domain; photograph by Elke Walford, Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz, provided by Art Resource, NY)

dranath were as different as their artistic aims, not to mention their different artistic agendas.[35] The German avant-garde critic Max Osborn, reviewing an exhibition of modern Indian art in Berlin in 1923, quite perceptively drew out the affinities between Gaganendranath and Feininger in their indifference to the formal implications of Analytic Cubism.[36] The Indian artist epitomizes the decontextualizing tendency of the age, shared as much by artists in the center as in the periphery:

This content downloaded from
200.144.202.53 on Mon, 14 Mar 2022 17:37:01 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

styles past and present could be appropriated to generate strikingly new meanings.

As his critique of Gaganendranath makes clear, Archer follows Roger Fry's notion of "significant form" as the antithesis to weak "feminine" anecdotal painting. In addition, the word "power" in the passage expresses his primitivist longing for the "masculine" formalism and virile geometry of Indian tribal art.[37] However, the overwhelming reason for Archer's dismissive evaluation of Gaganendranath's "Cubist" works lay in the Indian painter's use of the visual language of a culture to which he did not belong. In other words, Gaganendranath suffered a loss of self in becoming a colonial hybrid. We can find interesting parallels in *"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art*, which while reifying tribal artifacts as timeless high art erased Third World modernisms, denying the existence of contemporary tribal artists in the name of authentic traditional art. Interestingly, according to Shelley Errington, genuine living "primitive" art ceased to exist in the twentieth century for complex reasons, such objects becoming denizens of the corridors of European ethnographic museums or objects of a nationalist tourist industry.[38]

Unlike Picasso, whose use of African sources did not compromise his integrity as a European artist, Gaganendranath's use of Cubism resulted in the loss of self as an Indian. I have called the complex discourse of power, authority, and hierarchy involved in the study of the non-Western avant-garde the Picasso manqué syndrome, as Archer's endeavor consisted almost entirely of tracing Picasso's putative influence. Inevitably, he reached the conclusion that Gaganendranath was a Cubist manqué, and his derivative works, based on a cultural misreading, were simply puerile imitations of the Spanish master. In short, the use of Cubism, a product of the dominant West, by an Indian artist who belonged to the colonized world, immediately locked him into a dependent relationship, the colonized mimicking the superior art of the colonizer. Archer's analysis of modern art in India rests on reductionist criteria employed by art historians to describe the reception of Western art in the periphery: while successful imitation was a form of aping, imperfect imitation represented a failure of learning.[39]

If it seems that there are no limits to what Western artists can appropriate from the peripheries, let me turn to what the Western canon suppresses. The relation of the early abstract painters to Eastern thought arouses strong emotions. The facts of the case are not so much in dispute as their implication and significance for the rise of abstract art. In other words, what importance can we attach to the role of these ideas in the paintings of Piet Mondrian, Kazimir Malevich, and Wassily Kandinsky, the three iconic figures of modernism? The formalists dismiss such interest as at best inconsequential and at worst an aberration; the transcendentalists affirm the central role of Eastern thought in nonfigurative art, sustained by Sixten Ringbom's painstaking research on the connection between Theosophy and abstract art, along with the contributions of other scholars. This interest culminated in 1986 in the ambitious exhibition *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890–1985*, held in Chicago, Los Angeles, and finally the Hague.[40]

The extent to which the abstract painters absorbed Eastern thought, discovered via Theosophy, is seen to be compromised because of that movement's dabbling in the occult. Yet surely it is possible to separate the wheat from the chaff and discern the genuine elements of Buddhist and Hindu philosophy in Theosophy that colored the intellectual makeup of these artists. Piet Mondrian is known to have admired the mystical poem *Bhagavad Gita* and the philosophy of the Upanishads, and he treasured the Indian mystic Jiddu Krishnamurti's "little book" until his death.[41] In 1914 Mondrian recorded in his notebook that he was developing the idea that art belonged to a higher spiritual realm that transcended the natural, a sentiment that owed as much to Neoplatonism as to the Upanishads. Mondrian also believed that the elementary forms were abstract, and they were the constituent elements of nonobjective art. Nonfigurative art has been described as an alliance of aesthetics and mysticism, "the essential stages of Mondrian's move from representation to pure abstraction."[42] One of the striking concepts for Mondrian as well as other pioneers of abstraction was the metaphysical idea of the absolute, which enabled them to break with what they saw as the last vestiges of mimesis, proclaiming the reality as belonging to the spiritual. Strikingly, the concept of nature was considered relative to the spiritual absolute, as the imperfect material world was to the perfection of mathematics. The idea recalls the definition of mathematics in ancient Indian thought, though the absolute is also a core Hegelian notion ultimately going back to Plato. Again, in the Upanishads, the Absolute (Brahman) is imagined as noncorporeal, the very antithesis of materiality and impermanence, ideas close to Mondrian's interpretation of the absolute, as his denial of the self paralleled the dissolution of reality in the Upanishads. Absolute purity, divested of all the material associations, chief among them illusionism, could not be achieved within empiricist foundations.[43]

John Golding is the most recent scholar to have recourse to the aesthetics of autonomy in order to reiterate the essentially formalist foundations of abstract art. In his Mellon Lecture of 1997, he argued that "at its best and most profound, abstract painting is heavily imbued with meaning, with content, and that, in order to make this content palpable, new formal pictorial innovations must be found to express it."[44] Rightly considering Mondrian's encounter with Cubism as the turning point in his oeuvre, Golding then asserts that the artist's purest and austere quest for ideal simplicity to be uncontaminated by spiritual elements.[45] Yet almost in the same breath, as an aside, Golding remarks that Mondrian's rejection of Renaissance materialism was predicated on equating flatness with spirituality.[46]

The work of Cézanne, Cubism, and Futurism were well-documented formative influences for Kazimir Malevich. However, as he moved toward pure abstraction he began to search for a philosophy that he felt most resonated with its spirit. The celebrated Indian savant Swami Vivekananda's Chicago lectures, published in 1904, introduced the Russian painter to the Upanishads, which certainly made some, and I would maintain substantial, contribution to his idea of pure geometry, the absolute, and the illusory nature of the three-dimensional universe, the Upanishadic *maya*. He defined Suprematism's "zero of form" as "objectlessness" rather than abstraction as such, which is again reminiscent of the Upanishadic *śūnyatā* (state of nought) and notions of conscious-

This content downloaded from
200.144.202.53 on Mon, 14 Mar 2022 17:37:01 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

ness, infinity, and the self.[47] I do not wish to labor the point, except to mention that in ancient Indian sacred geometry, unlike the restless circle, the square is the ultimate and ideal form and the site of the absolute (Brahmasthana), because of its essential stasis. One cannot help recall that the most original creations of Malevich were based on the square, the painting *The Black Square* being the ultimate expression.[48] These metaphysical ideas were no less important than his interest in Futurism and formalist theories.

The evidence that Kandinsky's spiritual progress from the mystical Russian faith to Eastern philosophy, including yogic meditation, paralleled the dissolution of corporeal form in his art is even more persuasive.[49] Although publicly reticent about his debt to Eastern thought, Kandinsky was prepared to express it in sympathetic company. When Michael Sadler, a champion of modernist art in Britain, and his son visited the artist in Germany in 1912, they were "so fascinated by [his] mystical outlook that they missed the last train. . . ."[50] Golding, recognizing the unique importance of the modernist text *On the Spiritual in Art* but unconvinced about ideas from outside the discourse of modernism, is puzzled by what to him seems an anomaly in the Russian's worldview.[51] *Art since 1900* simply dismisses the "unwelcome religious flavor" of Kandinsky's *On the Spiritual in Art*.[52]

Both formalists and transcendentalists marshal strong arguments in support of their particular point of view. The presence of the purely formalist Western aspects in abstract painting, as part of the art historical continuum, and "exotic" Eastern spiritual elements are viewed as essentially agonistic and incompatible. The insistence on the truth of one to the exclusion of the other rules out the possibility of the coexistence of contradictory elements in an individual's mental makeup. In the pages of the avant-garde journal *De Stijl*, for instance, idealist aesthetics, industrial mechanics, utopian politics, and rationalism intermingled with notions of spirituality. The history of the avant-garde has contributed to the disjunction between rationalism and irrationalism, writes Néstor García Canclini, who proposes that a theory of art that transcends the antagonism between thought and intuition would contribute to a reconfiguration of the dilemmas of the late twentieth century.[53]

One argument in favor of the formalists is that Eastern thought was filtered through the garbled preachings of Helena Blavatsky, the cofounder, with Henry Steel Olcott, of Theosophy. As a movement, Theosophy attracted controversy, and Mme Blavatsky was occasionally accused of charlatanism. And yet its more philosophical aspects had influenced a number of leading late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century figures, among them the feminist Annie Besant. However, even allowing for the limitations of Theosophy, it is more to the point to explain the attraction these antimaterialist doctrines held for these artists. If Eastern thought fired the artists' imagination with the promise of an alternative intellectual standpoint, why was there a need for such an alternative in the first place? By the mid-nineteenth century, the crisis of capitalism gave rise to a series of social thinkers from John Ruskin, William Morris, Lev Tolstoy, and Karl Marx to a whole range of utopian critics of urban modernity. Many artists rebelled as much against Victorian materialism as against mimetic art; some sought to restore the integrated community that had been lost with the rise of urban modernity and had led to the alienation of individuals from society.[54] To many, nonindustrial societies held out the promise of social integration. Modernists, especially abstract painters, who "felt" at home in this world, sought affinities with the "decorative" art of the "primitive" and non-Western peoples untouched by "materialistic" Renaissance naturalism. That is when they turned to Eastern, particularly Indian, philosophy, which is described by David Pan as "the intellectual context of the abstract method."[55] In light of creative needs that went beyond mere fashion, they engaged critically with Eastern philosophy rather than merely reproducing Eastern spiritual concepts in their works. They found sustenance in a form of syncretism that offered fresh existential and epistemological possibilities. It is this vision of primitivism that served as an alternative to Enlightenment rationality. These artists viewed the distinction between the primitive and the modern as the difference between the spiritual and the material dimensions of human existence.[56] Charles W. Haxthausen has explored the writings of Wilhelm Hausenstein, one of the German "expressionist" critics who longed for the restoration of an integrated German culture to overcome the alienation between artist and society. The goal of this avant-garde theory "was an anonymous, collective art, integrated with the praxis of life. . . ."[57] Kandinsky and Marc, editors of the journal *Blaue Reiter*, were characterized by Haxthausen as "romantic anti-capitalists" who saw avant-garde art as heralding a new age of spirituality parallel to Eastern thought.

Colonial mentality deems cultural transmissions to be a one-way process flowing from the Occident, but fascination with the East has periodically surfaced in the West in different guises. In the eighteenth century, it gave rise to the Oriental Renaissance, which was in many ways as influential as the "first" Renaissance.[58] The following passage in J. J. Clarke may well apply to the controversy over abstract artists' debt to the East.

> [There is] a persistent reluctance to accept that the West could ever have borrowed anything of significance from the East, or to see the place of Eastern thought within the Western tradition . . . [as] only a trivial part of a wider reaction against the modern world. For some the Orient is still associated with shady occultist flirtations, the unconscious rumblings of the repressed irrational urges of a culture that has placed its faith in scientific rationalism.[59]

Art and the Pathology of Influence

The above debate seems to hinge on the question of influence, and influence has been the key epistemic tool, implicitly or explicitly, in the asymmetrical valuations of cultural exchanges between Eastern and Western art. As an art historical category, though, influence ignores significant aspects of cultural encounters, especially the enriching value of the cross-fertilization of cultures that has nourished societies since time immemorial. These exchanges of ideas and forms need not necessarily be interpreted through ideas of domination and dependence.[60] Rudolf Wittkower, the great authority on the migration of symbols across ancient cultures, traced the fascinating story of how the West received and transformed images and motifs from the Orient in an inter-

This content downloaded from
200.144.202.53 on Mon, 14 Mar 2022 17:37:01 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

action that had no basis in political competition.[61] In this respect, we can learn useful lessons from historians of material culture, who seek to study in a less value-laden way the global exchange of artifacts of material culture. They include within their purview not only objects of high art but also ceramics, glass, metalwork, textiles, and furnishings. Drawing on the theoretical perspective of the knowledge economy, they analyze the transmission of technical skills across borders, setting them in a historical framework as an aspect of global connection.[62]

The advent of modernism in Asia, Africa, and Latin America could thus be studied as the transfer of technology, which in other fields is accepted as part of the global process of cross-fertilization. However, such a perception is already defined by a discourse of power, colored by assertions of Western superiority and consequent feelings of inferiority, resignation, denial, and resistance on the part of non-Western nations. In the nineteenth century, this political dimension was exacerbated during a period of the West's ascendancy, when peoples were ranked within a global hierarchy of chain of being, race, and evolution. Borrowing from outside the West was inconceivable to the Victorians, who would concede only the Greeks and the Romans as the twin classical giants on whose shoulders European civilization stood. It was seen in the field of science, which was in awe of classical empiricism as the mainspring of the experimental method. Yet it was the union of empiricism with the Hindu place value system of numbers that laid the foundations of the great scientific revolution that came to fruition only in the eighteenth century. Nor should one ignore the enormous contributions of the Chinese to Western technology—paper, printing press, distillery, gunpowder, and the compass, to name the most obvious. It would be reasonable to accept that the triumph of modern science was a product of a historical situation in the eighteenth century that drew on different traditions, including those that were extraneous to the West but thoroughly internalized. But because of the part the classical world played in European cultural formation (*Bildung*), the Greek heritage was increasingly taken to be the sole contributor to European parthenogenesis.[63]

In the context of this pervasive ideology of progress, "borrowing" implied the dependence of the inferior culture on the superior and dominant one, an idea nowhere more ubiquitous than in the field of art. It was as natural for the colonized to imitate as it was inconceivable for the colonizer to take part in this exercise. This may have something to do with Johann Joachim Winckelmann's epithet "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur" for classical art, which swayed generations, including seminal thinkers such as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Marx.[64] Notions of stylistic influence acquired a special significance for colonial art historians, who were obsessed with tracing the Western grammar of non-Western modernisms and ranking them within a universalist world order. I can do no better than quote Michael Baxandall's powerful indictment here, describing the obsession with stylistic influence as a curse, or remind ourselves of Harold Bloom's celebrated phrase the "anxiety of influence." Baxandall writes in *Patterns of Intention* that artistic influence seems to reverse the active-passive relationship, "which the historical actor experiences, and the inferential beholder will wish to take into account." He further argues that responding to circumstance, the artist makes an intentional selection from a range of sources. This is a purposeful activity on the artist's part, which involves making conscious choices.[65]

If we discard stylistic genealogy, what can we put in its place? The overdetermined analysis based on the relationship of dependence between the borrower and his or her source is slowly being undermined even by historians of European art. In an absorbing account of Jacques-Louis David's workshop, Thomas Crow uses the term "emulation" to illuminate the master-pupil relationship in which David paid a moving tribute to his late pupil Jean-Germain Drouais as not only his equal but also someone worthy of emulation.[66] Elizabeth Cropper also deploys emulation to challenge influence as a convenient analytic tool. Drawing on Thomas Greene's reading of the Italian Humanists, who attempted to set up an active dialogue with ancient classical authors, Cropper explores the "intertextual" character of artistic styles, which engages with past models in a dialectical and even agonistic mode. Such conscious heuristic imitation advertises its derivations, defining itself by asserting its distance from these sources.[67]

Gaganendranath's relation with Cubism was similarly heuristic. He admired the movement yet felt distanced from it culturally, making it perfectly clear that he was not seeking to reproduce the French Cubists. He once explained to the journalist Kanhaiyalal Vakil that "the new technique is really wonderful as a stimulant."[68] Nonetheless, the Indian painter's visual conventions continued within the bounds of Oriental art, not least the miniature scale of his works. The visiting English painter William Rothenstein confirmed this when he mentioned that Gaganendranath remained an Oriental "miniaturist with an eye for exquisite lapidary details."[69] Equally, despite grumbles from the nationalists for abandoning his earlier "Orientalist" style, the artist insisted that Cubism had simply "enabled me to [express] better with my new technique . . . than I used to do with my old methods."[70]

I propose here another explanatory tool for understanding the generation of social and cultural meaning within the context of colonial art. The concept of paradigm change, postulated by Thomas Kuhn in the history of science, provides a convincing argument for change through adoption. As Kuhn seeks to demonstrate, knowledge develops in a succession of tradition-bound periods, punctuated by revolutionary breaks or, in his term, paradigm shifts. These shifts occur when a system breaks down, or when anomalies in one paradigm force new paradigms to emerge. New paradigms function by challenging the norms of a given practice that now seems constricting and vulnerable to challenge. The new paradigm in its turn marginalizes practices that no longer conform to their criteria.[71]

The advent of academic naturalism during the colonial era was the first great revolutionary break in India that profoundly transformed art institutions, practices, patronage, genres, materials, as well as artistic style, moving from flat two-dimensional pictures to illusionist naturalism. The paradigm change ushered in by colonial rule simply made the earlier practice that tied artists to private patronage obsolete. Artists now emerged as independent professionals who depended more on public support and recognition. This phase

This content downloaded from
200.144.202.53 on Mon, 14 Mar 2022 17:37:01 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

lasted from the 1850s to about the 1920s. In the 1920s, the tensions between academic artists and the nationalist purveyors of a Pan-Asian nonnaturalist mode, known as oriental art, forced a second revolutionary break. Artists such as Gaganendranath sought to emancipate themselves from the constrictive and artificial polarity between the two modes of artistic representation, namely, academic naturalism and "decorative" Orientalism. The language of modernism, signifying changes in artistic imperatives in a rapidly globalizing world, offered the Indian avant-garde a new visual means to challenge the previous artistic paradigm centering on mimetic representation.[72]

Archer had the whole weight of art history behind him in his evaluation of Gaganendranath's paintings. The modernist canon encompasses a great deal more than a simple matter of influence, as its powerful teleology constructs a whole world of belongings and exclusions, the epicenter and its outlying regions. The linear interpretation of art history boasts a long and distinguished tradition, going back to Giorgio Vasari, whose *Lives of the Most Eminent Architects, Painters and Sculptors of Italy* created the master narrative for Renaissance art, based on the conquest of visual representation. Additionally, the stylistic categories, drawn from classical norms, that motivated Vasari's notion of artistic progress automatically excluded those art forms that did not conform to them.[73] The Vasarian master narrative defined Florence, Rome, and Venice as centers of innovation, categorizing other regions in Italy as sites of delayed growth and imitation. As it has been argued in studies of Renaissance art inspired by Vasari, periphery is not a matter of geography but of art history.[74]

Vasari did not just valorize the three centers within Italy, he also displayed prejudice against the art of other nations. In the late eighteenth century, Winckelmann, whose own preference was for Greek art, reconfigured and reified these prejudices by formulating climatic, national, and racial differences in art as objective facts.[75] Vasarian teleology enjoyed the added confidence of a positivist art history in the nineteenth century, as evolutionary doctrines enabled art historians to map world art from its putative "primitive" base to its triumphal climax in Victorian history painting, with Oriental art occupying the intervening space. By this token, Indian miniature painting, a species of Oriental art, though charming in itself, was assigned a respectable middle rank in world art. The nationalist response to colonial art history in India was to develop a decorative form of Oriental art in repudiation of academic naturalism.[76]

To be sure, the Western avant-garde was in the forefront of challenging the hegemonic claims of academic art, and its revolutionary message provided inspiration for the avant-garde in the colonized countries. But the implied hierarchy in the relation between center and periphery could not be so easily resolved. In the cultural economy of global modernity, all artistic productions in Asia, Africa, and Latin America became marginal to the preoccupations of the core, that is, the art of Paris and later postwar London or New York. Set against the originary discourse of the avant-garde, emanating from these metropolitan centers, other modernisms were silenced as derivative and suffering from a time lag because of their geographic locations. Yet the significant point is that the center–periphery relation is not only one of geography but also of power and authority that implicates race, gender, and sexual orientation. Viewed from this perspective, the concept of the periphery assumes important theoretical significance. Modernism created its own tacit exclusions and inclusions, instances of which are scattered throughout *Art since 1900.*

A Counter Discourse of Modernism

With such a powerfully embedded ideology that privileges certain definitions of art to the exclusion of others, how can we shift the center of gravity of the modernist discourse? We need to destabilize Vasarian concepts of artistic center and periphery while loosening the linearity of art history, something given unique authority in Hegel's theory of artistic progress as the inevitable unfolding of the world spirit. First, we must seek explanatory tools that adequately describe art practices and their social and cultural milieus in the so-called outlying areas, taking into account the peculiar contextual needs and expressions of regional artistic productions and consumptions, along with the local assertions of global concerns. I propose below some tentative strategies for recovering the counter discourse of modernism, largely drawn from my own work on Indian modernism covering several decades, which I hope will be of relevance to other "peripheral" regions, as well as help fashion more nuanced art histories drawing on the richness of truly global experiences.

At the outset, I must acknowledge the efforts of recent scholars to find strategies of empowerment through new readings of the avant-garde in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Visual studies and postcolonial theory have made valuable contributions toward destabilizing the modernist canon and challenging hierarchy and value in art history, prising open the narrow empirical connoisseurship-focused discipline of art history involving analysis of style, iconography, and documentation. Its own practice owes debts to a post-Marxian discursive approach based on semiotics, poststructuralism, and psychoanalysis. The theorists of visual culture seek to erase the distinction between the fine arts and a range of material objects that had been excluded from the canon, thereby seeking to destroy the exclusivity of the concept of high "art."[77] Keith Moxey makes a valuable point in support of the inclusive concept of "visual culture" that is not restricted to what is generally defined as high art in the West, which tends to perpetuate the global inequality in power relations. His view is analogous to Pierre Bourdieu's pertinent comment that modes of representations are essentially expressions of political conflicts.[78] John Clark, basing his view on the semiotic theory expounded by Umberto Eco, describes Western modernism as a "closed" system of discourse, which cannot accommodate new modernist discourses to which the regions beyond the West have given rise.[79] And yet the most exciting aspect of modernisms across the globe is their plurality, heterogeneity, and difference, a "messy" asymmetrical quality that makes them all the more vital and replete with possibilities.

Geeta Kapur seeks to restore the Indian artist's agency through what she terms a radical restructuring of the international avant-garde.[80] Wifredo Lam, as an artist of multiple heritage, is "a deft juggler of cultural modes, as a potent symbol of the intermixing of cultures that will flower in our increasingly 'multicultural' civilization," as described by Jason

This content downloaded from
200.144.202.53 on Mon, 14 Mar 2022 17:37:01 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Edward Kaufman.[81] The Tanzanian artist, writer, and activist Everlyn Nicodemus develops the notion of "mutual appropriation," contending that "our urge for change and modernization is as universal as our sense of tradition."[82]

A most persuasive tool for unsettling the hegemonic canon has been the concept of hybridity. Among Latin American scholars, Néstor García Canclini uses the concept to propose "multi-temporal heterogeneities," while Gerardo Mosquera sets forth the notion of decentralized international culture to argue that the peripheries are ceasing to be defined entirely by the notion of tradition. They are emerging as multiple centers of international culture as well as strengthening local developments in a constant process of cultural hybridization.[83] Hybridity, a biological term, is theorized by Homi K. Bhabha in order to empower the diaspora thrown up by global migration that automatically generates situations of inclusion and exclusion. "[An] interstitial passage between fixed identifications," he writes, "opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy."[84] The compelling nature of his formulation for art history and its promise lie as much in challenging the essentialism of cultural difference asserted by the colonial order as in countering the monolithic discourse of the avant-garde.[85] Some concerns have been raised about the theory regarding its limited ability to explain the role of artistic agency and the transformation of material culture through the integration of foreign elements. "Because of its semantic associations and resonances," Andrew Causey, for instance, cautions, "[hybridity] is a metaphor that diffuses agency and unintentionally masks possible relations of power."[86]

While the theory of hybridity undoubtedly offers empowerment to the minorities of multiple heritage who are marginalized by what are characterized as "insiders" rooted in a culture, there are artists to whom the concept of hybridity can hardly do justice. For these artists outside the West, national identity has furnished a language of resistance to colonial art, especially in a period when many Asian, African, and Latin American countries were struggling to create a counternarrative in answer to the dominant canon. A group of Latin American art historians were unhappy with *Art since 1900* precisely because it failed to recognize that in the countries south of the United States, modernism, modernity, and modernization have been intimately tied to the construction of cultural identity or relate to the disjunction "where the dreams and desires of modernity are fully developed but modernization is not yet wholly established."[87] However valuable hybridity is, an unintended consequence of valorizing it to the exclusion of other possibilities would be to consign to oblivion artists such as Roy by the very fact of their not resisting through an "interstitial" narrative. But they, too, are major players in the global process of modernity. The difficulties of studying contemporary art forms that do not conform to a particular avant-garde discourse have led art historians to propose alternative modernisms or regional modernisms. One of the thoughtful recent contributions to the enlarging of the canon has been a set of essays entitled *Cosmopolitan Modernisms*, edited by Kobena Mercer, who comments on the unanticipated consequences of the global processes of modernity that create a two-way traffic between the West and the rest.[88]

Cosmopolitan Primitivism

Modernism is generally presented as a hypostatic image, beyond time and space. Yet the Western avant-garde, with all its achievements, we may remind ourselves, has been historically situated with its own set of conventions, even though its experience can and has enriched other traditions. Therefore, we may renounce Art History in the sense used by Hans Belting but pay closer attention to particular art histories, the contexts of their ideologies, contradictions, and fractures in their engagement with modernity.[89] To my mind, multiple local possibilities illuminate the global processes of modernity more effectively than a grand globalizing narrative, which is more likely than not to perpetuate a relationship of power. My particular field, as I have indicated, is the rise of the avant-garde in India in the 1920s, and I have tried to show that its history can be meaningfully mapped within the context of nationalist resistance to the British Empire. It is possible to formulate concepts that will address the particular interactions between global modernity, artistic production, and the construction of national identity not just in India but also in regions that seek to resist the colonial-capitalist cultural dominance.

This inflected narrative of global modernity, I would argue, clearly yields another possible way of restoring the artist's agency in the context of colonial empires, and that is by analyzing art practices and reception as a cultural document that is historically situated. One serious criticism of influence as an analytic tool is that it views artists as passive agents of transmission rather than active agents with the ability to exercise choice.[90] A little while ago I raised the question of center and periphery in connection with Vasarian categories. But center–periphery also relates to the wider politics of the colonial order. One of the powerful aspects of modern nationalism has been the interplay of the global and the local in the urban space of colonial culture, led by the Western-educated intelligentsia, who acted as surrogates for the nation. Colonial expansion gave rise to the worldwide phenomenon of the hybrid cosmopolis, often favoring port cities or entrepôts for the circulation of material goods mediated by local merchants and middlemen. These cosmopolitan cities emerged as flourishing centers of cultural exchange.[91]

I want to use the example of Calcutta as a hybrid metropolis here to explain the role of this urban center in the growth of the first avant-garde tendency in India. As the capital of British India, it became the locus of colonial encounters, its Bengali inhabitants emerging as beneficiaries as well as interlocutors of colonial culture. In the nineteenth century, the Bengal renaissance pioneered Indian modernity, a hybrid intellectual enterprise underpinned by a dialogic relation between the colonial language, English, and the modernized vernacular, Bengali.[92] English as the colonial medium of instruction gave Bengali elite access to the Enlightenment, opening up a window to the West, prompting one of the finest flowerings of a modern literary tradition. The great poet Rabindranath Tagore, possibly the best-known cultural figure in the interbellum years, was a product of the Bengal renaissance.[93]

This content downloaded from
200.144.202.53 on Mon, 14 Mar 2022 17:37:01 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Modernity, which followed European expansion in India, gave rise to a globally "imagined community" based on print capitalism; its membership was as vast as it was anonymous, no longer having the need for face-to-face communication and yet sharing a corpus of ideas on modernity.[94] The Bengali intelligentsia admirably demonstrates the negotiation of the wider cosmopolitan modernity through the printed medium, since it had a limited acquaintance with expatriate Europeans and even less so with distant Britain.[95] To explain this community's critical engagement with modern thought, I put forward the notion of the "virtual cosmopolis" here. This was essentially a hybrid city of the imagination, which engendered elective affinities between the elites of the center and the periphery on the level of intellect and creativity. Their shared outlook was possible not only through the printed media but also through major hegemonic languages, such as English in the case of the Bengalis in India, as well as French and Spanish disseminated through colonial encounters. In sum, the colonial intelligentsia negotiated their transactions with modernity essentially by means of virtual cosmopolitanism.

Cosmopolitanism is an inevitable consequence of global technology transfers and communication and transport revolutions. Arjun Appadurai, who theorizes globalization, draws our attention to the contradictory pulls of homogenization and heterogenization, to which the colonial orders, based in European capitals and spread throughout the non-Western world, gave rise.[96] Mercer prefers the term "cosmopolitan," as a sharper conceptual tool in the study of worldwide interactions of artistic modernism, to the confusing array of terms such as "global," "international," "cross-cultural," and "culturally diverse."[97] In sympathy with Aristotelian universals, the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah views cosmopolitan values as the thread that ties human beings together. He rejects both the politics of difference and nationalist fabrications of exclusive claims to cultural patrimony, reiterating everyone's right to share the common human heritage. He has faith in the ability of the individual to transcend parochialism, to demand to be a citizen of the world.[98] While the imaginary citizen may find this desirable, he or she may not have the wherewithal to achieve such a world affiliation. Power and authority confer visibility and inclusion, in the historically uneven relation between center and periphery, allegorized in the mutual relationship of Luis Buñuel and Jorge Luis Borges. Borges once asserted, "I believe . . . our patrimony is the universe; we should essay all themes and we cannot limit ourselves to purely Argentinian subjects in order to be Argentinian." In his autobiography, *My Last Sigh*, the Spanish filmmaker found the Argentinian guilty of self-absorption and pretension, inflicting the ultimate snub with the telling aside, "as we say in Spanish."[99]

In the context of the present global diaspora, recognizing the outcome of forced migration, exile, and other border crossings, James Clifford puts forward "discrepant cosmopolitanism" as a notion of "cosmopolitanism-from-below" that generates lived experiences of unfinished local and global identities.[100] This cosmopolitan mode of the powerless and the disadvantaged refers essentially to globalization from below.[101] Even though I am speaking of an elite in India who are not physically dispossessed, my definition of virtual cosmopolitanism is closer to Clifford's than to Appiah's because of the uneven power relation between center and periphery, and between the colonial powers and the subject nations in my period of study. Of course, the cosmopolitan ideal can be full of ambiguities, and being well versed in cosmopolitanism often may connote imbibing the values of the hegemonic center or of the colonial regime. However, the important point I want to make here is that asymmetrical power relations do not prevent the free flow and cross-fertilization of ideas on the level of "virtuality," as has happened across the globe in the age of knowledge and communications revolution in the previous century.[102]

How does virtual cosmopolitanism enable the periphery, whether formerly colonized or not, to contribute to the project of modernity on an intellectual level? One of the most creative ideas developed by Indian avant-garde artists in the 1920s in their exercise of virtual cosmopolitanism was to develop an empowering concept of primitivism. It enabled them to construct their resistance to urban industrial capitalism and the ideology of progress, the cornerstone of colonial empires. Jamini Roy, with whom I began, was one of the most striking exponents of artistic primitivism in India, but the tendency spawned other remarkable figures as well.[103]

Primitivism, we are aware, represents the romantic longing of a complex society for the simplicity of premodern existence. The crisis of the industrial age, which was traced back to Enlightenment rationality, made nineteenth-century utopians embrace primitivism with fervor. Though primitivism helped temper the relentless progressivism of colonial-industrial modernity, one cannot ignore the inner tensions and contradictions within the concept, described by Edward Said as "the age-old antetype of Europe . . . a fecund night out of which European rationality developed."[104] Primitivism stands charged with complicity in sustaining colonial hegemony in its representations of the non-West and in its consumption of primitive art.[105] It is characterized as a fetishistic discourse that evokes simultaneous fear of and desire for the Other.[106] Western artists have been both primitivism's beneficiaries, in terms of an enlarged formal armory, and its unwitting victims, because by "articulating their own fantasies about the meaning of the objects and about the peoples who created them, artists have been party to the erasure of the self-representations of colonized peoples in favour of Western representations of their realities."[107] Nonetheless, as Foster points out, the avant-garde's identification with the primitive, "however imaged as dark, feminine, and profligate, remained a *dis*identification with white, patriarchal, bourgeois society."[108] We have already encountered some of the best-known cases of primitivism inspiring the avant-garde, which declared its allegiance to primitive art, children's art, and the art of the mentally ill. The naïveté of primitive art is a myth. African art, for instance, is governed by strict aesthetic conventions, but the potent myth helped emancipate Western artists from the constraints of classical taste, bringing about a remarkable paradigm shift. The other primitivism, we may remind ourselves, was the critical modernism of nonobjective art. For the avant-garde, the artistic discourse of primitivism opened up the possibility of aesthetic globalization as part of art historical consciousness.[109]

This content downloaded from
200.144.202.53 on Mon, 14 Mar 2022 17:37:01 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

The very ambiguities, instabilities, and fractures within primitivism provided the colonized a singular weapon with which to interrogate the capitalist/colonial world of modernity, enabling them to produce a counter modern discourse of resistance.[110] In the West, the very flexibility of primitivism offered endless possibilities, ranging from "going native" to a radical questioning of Western positivism.[111] What the periphery did was to turn the outward "gaze" of Europe back to the West itself, deploying the very same device of cultural criticism to interrogate the urban-industrial values of the colonial empires.[112] In many ways, Mahatma Gandhi was the most profound "primitivist" critic of the twentieth century. In 1909, his revolutionary booklet *Hind Swaraj, or Indian Home Rule* set out his anticolonial resistance based on a critique of Western civilization as a slave to the machine.[113]

Thus, primitivism as a critical form of modernity formed a bridge between Eastern and Western critics of industrial capitalism that affected the peripheries no less than the West. Primitivists did not deny the importance of technology in contemporary life; they simply refused to accept the teleological certainty of modernity.[114] The politicized "ruralism" that emerged in the 1920s in India was the particular Indian expression of a global response to modernity, as the definition of nationhood shifted from the pan-Indian to the local. It inspired a whole generation of artists, among whom Jamini Roy was the most original. One of Roy's initial concepts was a series of moral contrasts he made between rural and urban values: rural honesty pitted against urban "decadence." His aim was to restore through art the precolonial community that had been severed from national life during British rule, alienating the elite from its cultural roots. The intimate connection between the vitality of an artistic tradition and its mythological richness became the central plank in his theory of collective art.[115] Through the folk idiom, Roy sought to restore the link between art and society, thereby repudiating artistic individualism and the "aura" of a work of art, the twin hallmarks of colonial art.[116]

These were the structural affinities between Roy's primitivism and the avant-garde critics of modernity in the West such as Hausenstein, although they arrived at their respective critiques of modernity through different routes.[117] Another feature shared by Roy and the Western primitivists was the rejection of universals, whether from a unifying "capitalist" or from a "nationalist" perspective. Roy argued that the mythology that nourished a community art had of necessity to be local and timeless.[118] Roy's belief in political heterogeneity, his insistence on "locality" as the site of the nation, and his preference for multiple aesthetic possibilities were uncannily similar to the ideas of the German Expressionists. I call these similarities structural affinities in a virtual global community, since neither knew the existence of the other.

At the same time, one must recognize the important differences between the primitivism of the center and the periphery. The Western primitivists were chiefly concerned with the predicament of urban existence, whereas Indian artists used primitivism as an effective weapon against colonial culture.[119] While Western primitivists aimed at merging art with life in a disavowal of the aesthetics of autonomy, they never ceased to believe in the unique quality of aesthetic experience. Roy endeavored to erase it, deliberately seeking to subvert the distinction between individual and collaborative contribution in a work of art.[120] Roy's objective of making the signature meaningless was his playful way of undercutting what Walter Benjamin called the "aura" of a masterpiece. In addition, he turned his studio into a workshop to reproduce his works cheaply. What the cognoscenti simply failed to grasp was Roy's emergence as a radical critic of colonialism through his art. The Indian painter deliberately eschewed artistic individualism and the notion of artistic progress, the two "flagships" of colonial art.[121] But this is not what necessarily made him the most remarkable painter of pre-independence India. Roy's search for the formal equivalent to his primitivist ideology eventually led him to the Bengali village scroll painting, the *pat*, which afforded an ideal synthesis of formalist strength and political theory. Through intense concentration and a ruthless ability to pare the inessential details, Jamini Roy created an avant-garde art of a monumental simplicity and deep social commitment (Fig. 9).

9 Jamini Roy, *Mother and Child*, ca. 1940s, gouache on board, 23⅜ × 15⅛ in. (59.5 × 38.5 cm). Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benaras Hindu University (artwork © Succession Jamini Roy)

Toward a New Art History

I have attempted here to recuperate the importance of the artistic modernisms of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Aus-

This content downloaded from
200.144.202.53 on Mon, 14 Mar 2022 17:37:01 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

tralia, which are regarded as derivative of the Western avant-garde. Communication and transport revolutions, massive population displacements, and other global processes led to the intense cross-fertilization of cultures and the growth of cosmopolitan values, chief among them the emergence of new art forms. In the West, avant-garde art, nourished by ethnographic arts and Eastern thought, broke away from the constraints of academic naturalism and classical taste. Modernism spread worldwide because of the West's dominance, and yet modernism's radical message inspired non-Western regions to create their own art of resistance against the colonial order.

Despite its radical agenda, the Western avant-garde failed to take into account either the progressive heterogenization of art or the richness and creativity of art practices in the peripheries. Its limitations stem from the monolithic, linear narrative of an art history that does not allow for difference, in part a reflection of the unequal power relations between center and periphery. My argument contributes to the recent debates on the need to shift the center of gravity from the originary discourse to a more heterogeneous definition of global modernism, incorporating the changes that have taken place in the twentieth century. It responds to the challenge of transnational art, calling into question the "purity" of the modernist canon and the consequent imputation of the derivative character of the periphery.

The rich variety of contemporary art around the world and its powerful advocates have, of course, helped to blunt the self-assurance of the canon; my conviction remains that old ideas will continue to seep out of the fault lines unless we consciously interrogate old ideas and their colonial antecedents and seek to replace them with a more inclusive art history. In the final analysis, the new art history will be enriched through a contextually grounded study of non-Western modernism that engages with the socially constructed meaning of artistic production. This will go a long way toward contesting the commonplace that peripheral modernisms are merely attempts to catch up with the originary avant-garde discourse.

Partha Mitter, professor emeritus, University of Sussex, has held fellowships at Cambridge, the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, the Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Mass., and CASVA, the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. His most recent work is The Triumph of Modernism *(2007) [16 Hawkswell Gardens, Oxford OX2 7EX, U.K., parthamitter@btinternet.com].*

Notes

I would like to express my appreciation to Hollis Clayson, who had intitally suggested that I write this essay for the "Interventions" series of the *Art Bulletin*, and to the previous editor, Marc Gotlieb, and the current editor, Richard Powell, for their helpful suggestions with regard to the essay. I am indebted to various friends and colleagues for ideas and comments, especially to Thomas Crow, Faya Causey, Debra Diamond, C. R. (Mark) Haxthausen, Michael Ann Holly, Keith Moxey, and Katharine Wilson, as well as the seminars at the Getty Research Institute (2000–2001), the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Mass. (2003–4), and the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (2005–6). My apologies if I have inadvertently failed to mention any individuals who have enriched my thinking on these issues.

1. Hans Belting, *The End of the History of Art?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) and *Art History after Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2003). See also Jonathan Gilmore's review of the latter, "Discipline Problem: Jonathan Gilmore on Hans Belting; Art History after Modernism," *Artforum*, October 2003, http://www.artforum.com (accessed June 10, 2008).
2. Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, and Benjamin Buchloh, *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004).
3. My recent work, Partha Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-Garde, 1922–1947* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), which charts the pioneering phase of Indian modernism as a form of resistance to British colonial rule in India, attempts to place the Indian artist in his historical context as well as to establish his global importance. Interestingly, work by Jamini Roy was collected by Peggy Guggenheim (*Out of This Century: Confessions of an Art Addict* [London: Andre Deutsch, 1979], 351–53), and it was shown at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., in 1956. Ann Landi, *Schirmer Encyclopedia of Art: Comprehensive Survey of World Artists, Works and Genres* (Gale Group Thomson Learning, http://www.Schirmer+Encyclopedia+of+Art and international@galegroup.com, also includes Roy in her survey. On Tarsila, see *Cultura* (Rio de Janeiro), 2nd year, no. 5 (January–March 1972), the commemorative edition for 1922–72. On Lam, see Lowery Stokes Sims, *Wifredo Lam and the International Avant-Garde, 1923–1982* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002). For the exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, see Simon Njami et al., *Africa Remix: Contemporary Art of a Continent* (London: Hayward Gallery, 2005). For the work of Everlyn Nicodemus, who has exhibited internationally, see, for instance, Jean Fisher, "Everlyn Nicodemus: Between Silence and Laughter," in *Displacements*, exh. cat. (Alicante: University of Alicante, 1997), reprinted in Fisher, *Vampire in the Text* (London: Institute of International Visual Arts, 2003).
4. Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism*; and idem, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850–1922: Occidental Orientations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
5. Foster et al., *Art since 1900*, 618.
6. Rosalind Krauss's critique of modernism in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985), through her study of reproductions, demythologizes modernism's claims to aesthetic purity, authenticity, originality, and freedom and its assertions of breaking with the past; Hal Foster's *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983) takes a moral stand against the instant gratification of contemporary culture; and Benjamin Buchloh persuaded the Dutch Kanaal Art Foundation to fund Everlyn Nicodemus's account of the German colonial venture in Africa, "Carrying the Sun on Our Backs," in *Andrea Robbins and Max Becher*, ed. M. Catherine de Zegher, exh. cat. (Kortrijk, Belgium: Kanaal Art Foundation, 1994), 49ff. I understand that this powerful critique of Nazi atrocity by Nicodemus was removed from the version of the catalog produced for the show when it went to Germany.
7. Reinhold Misselbeck et al., *20th Century Photography Museum Ludwig Cologne* (Cologne, 1996). Raghubir Singh's tragic death in his early fifties brought to an abrupt end his brilliant career. See the book based on his retrospective at the Art Institute of Chicago with his comments, *River of Colour: The India of Raghubir Singh* (London: Phaidon, 1998), and many of his other volumes. A recent exception is Robin Lenman, ed., *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), in which he is listed. For Seydou Keïta, see Michael Rips, "The Ghosts of Seydou Keïta," *New York Times*, January 22, 2006, Arts and Leisure section, 30–33. The same fate often overtakes critics of modernism from the periphery, as for instance, C. L. R. James. David Craven, "C. L. R. James as a Critical Theorist of Modernist Art," in *Cosmopolitan Modernisms*, ed. Kobena Mercer (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), 146–67.
8. Honorable exceptions are Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002); Delia Gaze and Marina Vaizey, in *Dictionary of Women Artists* (Chicago: Fitzroy Deerborn, 1997), vol. 2, 126–68; and the Sher-Gil entry by Geeta Kapur in *Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner (London: Oxford University Press, 1998), vol. 27, 593–94. I discuss Sher-Gil's importance in Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism.*
9. See the photograph for the campaign by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) against wearing animal fur with the caption, "We'd rather go naked than wear fur," with Naomi Campbell and four white supermodels, who have been homogenized despite their differences in features, in Partha Mitter, "The Hottentot Venus and Western Man: Reflections on the Constructions of Beauty in the West," in *Cultural Encounters, Representing Otherness*, ed. Elizabeth Hallam and Brian V. Street (London: Routledge, 2000), 38, fig. 2.2. Such

This content downloaded from
200.144.202.53 on Mon, 14 Mar 2022 17:37:01 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

homogenization is mentioned in the field of music by the composer Steve Reich, who writes with regret that "what is now called 'world music,' I find that, to my ears, it is basically African pop and rock, Indonesian pop and rock, South American pop and rock. . . . The traditional indigenous music in Ghana, for example, seems to have largely disappeared. . . ." ("Sound and Vision," *Saturday Guardian Review*, September 30, 2006, 14). Actually, a more exciting fusion can be heard in not only the compositions of Reich himself, but also Ravi Shankar's works, Toru Takemitsu's compositions on the traditional Japanese instruments the sakuhachi and koto, the Chinese composer Tan Dun's pieces, Olivier Messiaen's *Turangalîla* Symphony, the work of the minimalists Philip Glass and John Adams, the works of John Faulds, Morton Feldman, John Cage, and the new jazz of Meredith Monk.

10. The consequences of this prescription are charted by Joseph Stiglitz in *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002).

11. E. H. Gombrich's classic study *Art and Illusion* (London: Phaidon, 1954) established the importance of cultural conventions in art with his radical work on artistic schemata and the critique of the "innocent eye," based on the psychology of perception and Benjamin Lee Whorf's linguistic theory.

12. Textbooks on world art until recently dealt almost exclusively with the progress of Western art from the Greeks via the Renaissance to the Victorians as the triumph of illusionist naturalism, and even now the art of the mass of humanity from the non-Western world forms only a small part of the narrative. The case of modernism within Europe is more complex; the Hungarian "nationalist" Post-Impressionist painters are excluded from the canon in contrast to the modernist artist László Moholy-Nagy, for instance.

13. Robrt Hughes, *The Shock of the New* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981), the famous BBC series and a lively book on the impact of modernism. One cannot be sure why music was not similarly affected. In India, for instance, if anything, classical music has had a new lease on life that owes nothing to the Western avant-garde, with the exception of a few outstanding fusion composers.

14. Adrian Stokes, "Reflections on the Nude," in *The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 336–37. I am indebted to Stephen Bann for this reference.

15. Robert Linsley, "Wifredo Lam: Painter of Negritude," *Art History* 11, no. 4 (December 1988): 529–30.

16. In India, this was accomplished by means of art schools and art societies that mounted art exhibitions. Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India*, pt. 2; Nora Annesley Taylor, *Painters in Hanoi: An Ethnography of Vietnamese Art* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 27–34; Apinan Poshyananda, *Modern Art in Thailand* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); and John Clark, *Modern Asian Art* (Sydney, 1998).

17. See, for instance, Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India*; and more specifically on Bengal, Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *The Making of a New "Indian" Art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

18. Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," *Partisan Review* 6, no. 5 (Fall 1939): 34–49.

19. T. J. Clark, "On the Social History of Art," in *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (London: University of California Press, 1973), 9–20. See Meyer Schapiro, "The Social Bases of Art" and "The Nature of Abstract Art," in *Modern Art: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: George Braziller, 1977), 185–211.

20. Thomas Crow, *Modern Art in the Common Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 33.

21. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*.

22. Hal Foster, *Art in America*, November 1982, 88–93, and a later version in *Art in Theory*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 1037.

23. See John Haber's review of modernism as less final, less enlightened, and less monolithic, "The Reusable Past: Rosalind E. Krauss; *The Originality of the Avant Garde*" "New.York.Art.Crit.: John Haber's Art Reviews," jhaber@haberarts.com (accessed June 10, 2008). On the West Indian critic's originality, see Craven, "C. L. R. James as a Critical Theorist," 146–65.

24. See William Rubin, ed., *"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984), x.

25. Hal Foster, "The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art," *October* 34 (Fall 1985): 45–69.

26. James Clifford, "Histories of the Tribal and the Modern," *Art in America*, April 1986, 164–215. See also Thomas McIvelley, "Doctor Lawyer Indian Chief," *Artforum*, November 1984, 54–60.

27. "The disturbing aspect of Western modernism," Clifford added, "Histories of the Tribal and the Modern," 166, "was its project of 'redeeming otherness,' in order to reconstitute non-Western art in its own image."

28. Rubin, *Primitivism in 20th Century Art*.

29. John Golding, *Paths to the Absolute* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 64.

30. It is important to point out that within the discourse of modernism the originality of the avant-garde has been seriously challenged by the introduction of the concept of repetition, reproduction, and copy, particularly in the work of Sherrie Levine. However, my point in the paper is about the dominant perception of the art of the periphery.

31. In Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism*, I have sought to revise much of the influence-driven colonial art history. For early artists, Geeta Kapur's insightful account of Sher-Gil; K. G. Subramanyan's obiter dicta on Rabindranath Tagore, "Rabindranath and Art: A Personal View," *Nandan*, nos. 1–2 (1977): 1–2; Ratan Parimoo's scholarly *The Paintings of the Three Tagores* (Baroda, 1973); and R. Siva Kumar's *Santiniketan: The Making of a Contextual Modernism* (New Delhi: National Gallery of Modern Art, 1997) are relevant. Kapur, who is the foremost critic of postindependence India, attempts to reconfigure the art of this later period, in, for instance, her provocative book *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India* (New Delhi: Tulika, 2000). For the late 1940s and 1950s, the useful documentation of Yashodhara Dalmia, *The Making of Modern Indian Art* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), should be consulted.

32. William George Archer, *India and Modern Art* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1959), 43.

33. I discuss this in a long section in Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism*, 18–27.

34. John Golding, *Cubism: A History and an Analysis, 1907–1914* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), gives the best account of Cubism's formal innovations.

35. Franz Marc and Lyonel Feininger created an imaginary world of animals and architecture, respectively, while the left-wing revolutionary Georg Grosz put fragmentations and a distorted perspective at the disposal of a powerful political narrative. Their contents were more revolutionary than those of the classic Cubists.

36. Max Osborn's review is cited in *Rupam* 15–16 (July–December 1923): 74. On Osborn, see Donald E. Gordon, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 29 (1966): 371 n. 17.

37. W. G. Archer's *The Vertical Man: A Study in Primitive Indian Sculpture* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1947) expresses Archer's longing for formalist as well as cultural primitivism. These primitivist sentiments, we know, were disseminated by Roger Fry, Clive Bell, and later Herbert Read, the chief conduits for modernism in the colonies. On his patronizing condescension for Indian nationalists as *déraciné*, see Archer, *India and Modern Art*, 34–37.

38. Clifford, "Histories of the Tribal and the Modern," 167. Shelley Errington, *The Death of Authentic Primitive Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), writes that concepts such as authenticity and primitivism have "died" because of attacks by cultural critics. At the same time, the penetration of nation-states, the tourist industry, and transnational corporations into regions that formerly produced these artifacts has severely reduced supplies of "primitive art," bringing about a second "death." Interestingly, African artists in Zimbabwe were inspired by the works of Western modernists to produce contemporary sculptures in a reappropriation of primitivism. Herbert E. Roese, "Modern Sculptures from Zimbabwe," July 12, 2000, http://web.onetel.net.uk/~herbertroese/africa4a.htm (accessed June 15, 2008). My thanks to Caroline Mustill for the information.

39. One implication of the concept of influence is the usual view that it demonstrates the periphery's lack of originality, which misreads the center (see the comments about Latin American artists in Sims, *Wifredo Lam*, 237). A lack of originality is not explicitly stated but it influences judgments in writing these artists out of history.

40. Sixten Ringbom, "Art in the Age of the Great Spiritual," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 29 (1966): 386–418. L. Sihare, "Oriental Influences on Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian, 1909–1917" (PhD diss., New York University, 1967). Kandinsky was called "un prince mongol" by the influential critic Will Grohmann because of his interest in Theosophy. (James J. Sweeney, "Piet Mondrian," *Partisan Review* 11, no. 2 [1944]: 173–76; and Peter Fingensten, "Spirituality, Mysticism, and Non-Objective Art," *Art Journal* 21 [Fall 1961]: 2–6.) Ringbom was a contributor to the major show organized by Maurice Tuchman, *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890–1985* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art; New York: Abbeville Press, 1986). For a reiteration of the influence of the Upanishadic notions of Brahman and Atman on Mondrian, see Robert Welsh, who finds

This content downloaded from
200.144.202.53 on Mon, 14 Mar 2022 17:37:01 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

the Calvinist stress on logic in the painter as claimed by M. H. J. Shoenmaekers unconvincing; Welsh, "Mondrian and Theosophy," in *Piet Mondrian 1872–1944, Centennial Exhibition* (New York: S. R. Guggenheim Museum, 1972), 35–51. Jacquelynn Baas, *The Smile of the Buddha* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), is the latest popular work on the subject.

41. Sihare, "Oriental Influences," 31–36.

42. Hilton Kramer, "Mondrian & Mysticism: 'My Long Search Is Over,'" *New Criterion* 14, no. 1 (September 1995), http://www.newcriterion.com/archive/14/sept95/hilton.htm (accessed October 25, 2006). Kramer produces impressive evidence in support of Mondrian's spirituality. In these artists, the Absolute could represent both the Hegelian Being and the Upanishadic Brahman, but it is unnecessary to exclude one for the other. The notion of the Absolute or Geist (Spirit) in Hegel's dialectical system derives from Plato's notion of Being as mediated by the Enlightenment, a period when God became secularized as pure Thought or Intellect. However, the existentialists from Søren Kierkegaard onward sought to reinscribe individual subjectivity. What would interest the abstract painters about the Absolute or Brahman in the Upanishads is the notion of a genderless and formless deity (as opposed to the Christian God) and the general unresolved character of existence and human freedom, proposed in the Hindu texts more as questions than as final answers.

43. Michael Leja, "Formalism Redivivus?" review of *Painting as Model* by Yve-Alain Bois, *Art in America*, March 1992, 35–39. Mondrian's idea of the female and male elements, nature and spirit, which find their "*pure expression, true unity, only in the abstract*," is uncannily similar to the dualistic Samkhya doctrine of *purusha* and *prakriti*. Arthur Danto, review of *Painting as Model*, *Art Journal* 51 (1992): 95–97. Stephen Melville, "Matter, Model and Modernism," *Art History* 15, no. 3 (September 1992): 387–91; and Paul Overy, "'Here-I-Am-Again-Piet': A Mondrian for the Nineties," *Art History* 18, no. 4 (December 1995): 584–605. Paul Deussen, *The Philosophy of the Upanishads* (New York: Dover, 1966) is a useful text to consult regarding the Upanishads. The modernist ideology of "purity" and its critique of representational art were inspired by the Platonic distinction between truth and appearance. Its extreme form was the notion of the absolute values of abstract art. Mark A. Cheetham, *The Rhetoric of Purity: Essentialism and the Advent of Abstract Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 164.

44. Golding, *Paths to the Absolute*, 8.

45. Ibid., 20.

46. "Natural Reality and Abstract Reality: An Essay in Trialogue Form," *De Stijl*, June 1919–July 1922, trans. H. Holtzman and M. B. James, in *The New Art—the New Life: The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995), quoted in Golding, *Paths to the Absolute* 14.

47. On Vivekananda's influence on Malevich, see Tuchman, *The Spiritual in Art*, 37. See also the important discussion by David Pan, "Primitivism and Abstraction," in *The Primitive Renaissance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 102–20. The Upanishads take the term *moha* to mean the delusion that accepts the natural world as real, whereas the only reality is the Brahman (Absolute) and Atman (Self) relationship. Here are some of the parallel ideas: the Buddhist Heart Sutra, for instance, mentions the five aggregates or substances (*pañcha bhuta*) as empty of inherent nature: form is empty, emptiness is form. The void is a positive concept here rather than an absence, which in ancient thought is imagined as *śhūnya* (zero), a mathematical symbol that arose in ancient India but is less easy to imagine within an empiricist paradigm (the Heart Sutra is translated in "Ancient Sutra Offers Guide to Ever-Changing Nature of Existence," *San Jose Mercury News*, May 19, 2001, Family and Religion, 1F). The "Nothingness" of Martin Heidegger and the *néant* of the existentialists such as Jean-Paul Sartre do not directly acknowledge Eastern thought, but they are closer to the Buddhist theory of nothingness or nonbeing as a positive entity and of consciousness as being prior to material existence than any Western philosophical system as such. Heidegger concedes the primacy of the West but questions its ability to engage in a dialogue with Eastern thought (on Heidegger, see Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* [Albany: State University of New York, 1988], 167–70 and passim). Sander H. Lee argues that Sartre's phenomenological existentialism and Buddhism have comparable theories of consciousness, while also noting their major differences: a materialistic, this-worldly orientation of the former as opposed to the transcendent, otherworldly orientation of the latter (Lee, "Notions of Selflessness in Sartrean Existentialism and Theravadin Buddhism," Keene State College, http://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Reli/ReliLee.htm (accessed June 15, 2008). Yet Sartre shares with Buddhism the notion of the Self as illusion and of nihilism (Sartre, *L'être et le néant* [Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1943]; and his 1945 lecture *Existentialism and Humanism*, trans. Philip Mairet [London: McEwen, 1948]).

48. Stella Kramrisch, "Square and Circle"; "The Square Mandala of the Earth"; and "Symbolism of the Square," in *The Hindu Temple* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1946), vol. 1, pt. 2, 19–43. Malevich's painting *White on White* is of course universally known.

49. Pan, *The Primitive Renaissance*, esp. the section on Kandinsky, 102–20.

50. Tom Steele, *Alfred Orage and the Leeds Art Club 1893–1923* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), 180. Michael Sadler was a founding member of the radical socialist Leeds Art Club. Kandinsky's aim of attaining the transcendental by rational means has been described as rational irrationalism. Rainer K. Wick, *Teaching at the Bauhaus* (Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz, 2000), 119–220).

51. Golding, *Paths to the Absolute*, 81.

52. Romy Golan, review of *Art since 1900*, *Art Bulletin* 88 (June 2006): 382. The recent exhibition at the Tate Modern on Kandinsky makes abundantly clear the influence of spiritual ideas on the Russian in his most productive period before he began to respond to other nonobjective painters, yet the contributors tend to skirt the issue. Hartwig Fischer et al., eds., *Kandinsky: The Path to Abstraction* (London: Tate Publishing, 2006).

53. Néstor García Canclini, "Remaking Passports: Visual Thought in the Debate on Multiculturalism," in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Donald Preziosi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 498–99.

54. Ferdinand Tönnies made the classic distinction between organic communities as opposed to modern self-willed societies in *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Leipzig, 1887).

55. Pan, *The Primitive Renaissance*, 112. Colin Rhodes, *Primitivism and Modern Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), provides an accessible summary of neoprimitivism, a term coined by the Russian modernists.

56. Pan, *The Primitive Renaissance*, 100–101, is especially perceptive on this issue. He questions the conventional formalist wisdom about primitivism and nonrepresentational art that tends to underplay the former's cultural importance.

57. Charles W. Haxthausen, "A Critical Illusion: 'Expressionism' in the Writings of Wilhelm Hausenstein," in *The Ideological Crisis of Expressionism*, ed. Rainer Rumold and O. K. Werckmeister (Columbia, S.C.: Camden House, 1990), 169–91.

58. R. Schwab, *La Renaissance orientale* (Paris: Payot, 1950). On the German Protestant philosopher Johann Georg Hamann and the German rejection of Western enlightenment, see Frank Edward Manuel, *The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959).

59. J. J. Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 1997), 5.

60. This is especially true of the Greeks, despised by the conquering Romans for their lack of valor and yet revered by them for their art and intellect. Margaret Miller, in *Athens and Persia in the Fifth Century: A Study in Cultural Receptivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), charts the reception of Persian culture in Greece and the way meaning and function change as outside elements enter a culture. My thanks to Sarah Morris for the reference.

61. Rudolf Wittkower, *Allegory and the Migration of Symbols* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977).

62. I am indebted for these ideas to the research project Global Arts: East Meets West; Creativity and Cultural Interchange in the Early Modern World, led by Professor Maxine Berg of Warwick University. I am not suggesting that these exchanges can be value-neutral or that hegemonic relations do not impinge on the mutual perceptions of East and West, but at least the main remit of the group is not to start with an unequal perception of global exchange dominated by the canon.

63. E. H. Gombrich, "Nova Reperta" (unpublished paper kindly lent by the late author). On the role of Indian mathematics, see George Thibaut, *Astronomie, Astrologie, und Mathematik* (Strasbourg: K. J. Trübner, 1899); B. B. Datta and A. N. Singh, *History of Hindu Mathematics*, vol. 1 (Lahore: Motilal Banerasidas, 1935); David Eugene Smith and Louis Charles Karpinski, *The Hindu-Arabic Numerals* (Boston: Ginn, 1911). The great opus on Chinese science is Joseph Needham's multivolume *Science and Civilization in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954–59) (with the assistance of Wang Ling and continued after his death by the institute named after him). Martin Bernal, in *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (London: Free Association Books, 1987), challenges the idea that Greek civilization was of purely European origin. Yet surprisingly, even as late as the period of the Enlightenment, an influential circle of savants, while acknowledging the great achievements of the Greeks, relegated them to the category of nonmodern cultures, essentially different from the modern West. Manuel, *The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods*.

64. This famous dictum of Winckelmann's is widely quoted; see, for in-

This content downloaded from
200.144.202.53 on Mon, 14 Mar 2022 17:37:01 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

stance, John Fleming and Hugh Honour, *A World History of Art* (London: Macmillan, 1982), 476.

65. Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 58–62.

66. Thomas Crow, *Emulation: Making Artists for Revolutionary France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

67. Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982). Greene, who regarded the relations of the Humanists to antique sources as a dialogue rather than a passive act, proposed "heuristic" or "dialectic" imitation, which advertises its derivations, then defines itself by distancing itself from them. See Elizabeth Cropper on imitation, influence, and invention in *The Domenichino Affair* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 99–127.

68. Gaganendranath Tagore, interview by Kanhaiyalal Vakil, *Bombay Chronicle*, June 30, 1926.

69. William Rothenstein, *Men and Memories* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1934), vol. 1, 63.

70. Gaganendranath, interview by Vakil.

71. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962). See Harrison and Wood, *Art in Theory*, 960–61, 964, for a succinct summary.

72. The profound changes in Indian art practice, organization, and outlook, as well as the nationalist construction of "oriental art" based on a synthesis of Indian and Japanese traditions as part of Pan-Asian cultural solidarity in the early twentieth century, are treated in Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India*. I discuss Gaganendranath Tagore's adoption of a new paradigm in Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism*, 18–27.

73. On the formation of classical taste and its influence on art history, see E. H. Gombrich, "Norm and Form: The Stylistic Categories of Art History and Their Origins in Renaissance Ideals," in *Norm and Form: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1966), 81–98.

74. The center–periphery bias has contributed to the devaluation of the originality of an artist like Correggio, who hailed from Parma, considered a mere province compared with Florence, Rome, and Venice, Vasari's three centers of art. Correggio's work has until now been assessed in terms of "catching up" with the styles of Michelangelo or Raphael, rather than as an independent achievement. See Pier Luigi De Vecchi and Giancarla Periti, introduction to *Emilia e Marche n Renascimento: L'identità visiva della "periferia,"* ed. Periti (Azzano San Paolo: Bolis, 2005), 7–11. See also Enrico Castelnuovo and Carlo Ginsberg, "Centro e periferia," in *Storia dell' arte italiana*, ed. Giovanni Previtali (Turin: Einaudi, 1979), vol. 1, 285–354.

75. Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, "National Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Aesthetic Judgments in the Historiography of Art," in *Art History, Aesthetics, Visual Studies*, ed. Michael Ann Holly and Keith Moxey (Williamstown, Mass.: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2002), 73–79, gives a scholarly account of national prejudices of art historians and attempts to circumvent them.

76. See Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pl. 94, for a painting by J. M. Gandy depicting the universal progress of the arts. On the construction of the art of anticolonial resistance in India, see idem, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India*, and on Bengal, see Guha-Thakurta, *The Making of a New "Indian" Art*. Vincent Smith (quoted in Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India*, 311) described Indian art as follows: while it deserved a respectable place among arts of the world, it was not of the first rank, "except for its eminent suitability to its country and people."

77. The literature on visual culture and poststructuralist cultural theory is vast, so I will cite here several important works that give a succinct account of the scope and importance of visual culture and its challenge offered to the canon. Norman Bryson, Michael Ann Holly, and Keith Moxey, eds., *Visual Culture: Images and Interpretations* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England for Wesleyan University Press, 1994); Moxey, *The Practice of Theory: Poststructuralism, Cultural Politics, and Art History* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994); and Holly and Moxey, *Art History, Aesthetics, Visual Studies*.

78. Keith Moxey kindly gave me access to his unpublished paper "Discipline of the Visual: Art History, Visual Studies, and Globalization," based on talks given at a course organized at the Universidad Complutense of Madrid and at various conferences. It came out in *Genre* 36 (2003): 429–48. Pierre Bourdieu, "The Production of Belief: Contributions to an Economy of Symbolic Goods," trans. Richard Nice, in *Media, Culture and Society: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Collins et al. (London: Sage, 1986), 154–55.

79. See John Clark, "Open and Closed Discourses of Modernity in Asian Art," in *Modernity in Asian Art* (Sydney: Wild Peony Press, 1993), 1–17. Clark applies Umberto Eco's theory of semiotics to the process of knowledge transfer, distinguishing between open and closed systems of discourses. In his later work *Modern Asian Art*, he expands on his initial ideas, proposing to study contemporary art in Asia as independent entities not tied to the concept of modernism and East-West polarity.

80. Geeta Kapur, "When Was Modernism in Indian Art?" in *When Was Modernism?* 298–99.

81. Jason Edward Kaufman, quoted in Sims, *Wifredo Lam*, 219. On the importance of artists of the periphery for Abstract Expressionism, see David Craven, "Abstract Expressionism and Third World Art: A Post-Colonial Approach to 'American' Art," *Oxford Art Journal* 121, no. 1 (1990): 44–65.

82. Everlyn Nicodemus, "Text-Textile-Lingua Franca," in *Mêtissages* (Ghent: MIAT, 2005), 89.

83. Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, trans. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); and Gerardo Mosquera, "Modernity and Africana: Wifredo Lam on His Island," in *Wifredo Lam*, exh. cat. (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte, Reina Sofía, Ministerio de Cultura, 1992), cited in Sims, *Wifredo Lam*, 236.

84. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), excerpted in Harrison and Wood, *Art and Theory*, 1112; for this proponent of the subversive function of colonial hybridity and his critics, see "Theorising the Hybrid" special issue, *Journal of American Folklore* 112, no. 445 (Summer 1999).

85. Deborah A. Kapchan and Pauline Turner Strong, "Theorizing the Hybrid," *Journal of American Folklore* 112, no. 445 (Summer 1999): 239–53. I am grateful to Faya Causey for the reference.

86. Andrew Causey, "The Singa Singa Table Lamp and the Toba Batak Art of Conflation," *Journal of American Folklore* 112, no. 445 (Summer 1999): 424–36, where he proposes the alternative word "conflation."

87. Robin Adèle Greeley, "Modernism: What El Norte Can Learn from Latin America," *Art Journal* 64 (Winter 2005): 82–83.

88. I cite here Michael Leja's pertinent complaint about studying modernism with the definitions of conceptual categories developed in connection with the French avant-garde art from the 1850s (Leja, abstract, the 28th Annual Conference of the Association of Art Historians [AAH]), "Culture, Capital, Colony," Liverpool, April 4–7, 2002). See also Mercer, introduction to *Cosmopolitan Modernisms*.

89. See n. 1 above.

90. In a powerfully suggestive volume of essays, Thomas Crow seeks to restore the artist as an active political agent as well as the importance of an art object whose complex meaning may elude verbal articulation. Crow, *The Intelligence of Art* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

91. Ackbar Abbas, "Cosmopolitan De-scriptions: Shanghai and Hong Kong," *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 775. Cosmopolitanism is now seen to be a global phenomenon. See its critiques in the same issue.

92. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments, Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), speaks of two spaces, the inner spiritual space and the outer secular one prevalent in colonial Bengal. On the sociocultural phenomenon of the Bengali Bhadralok and their role in creating an autonomous culture in Calcutta, see Sukanta Chaudhuri, *Calcutta: The Living City*, vol. 1, *The Past* (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1990).

93. Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), Asia's first Nobel laureate, poet, composer, playwright, essayist, political thinker, and renaissance personality, inspired a wide and diverse range of people in East and West, including the European composers Leoš Janáček and Alexander von Zemlinsky, the poet Wilfred Owen, and the novelist André Gide, among others. See Krishna Kripalani, *Rabindranath Tagore* (New York: Grove Press, 1962); as well as Ramananda Chatterjee, ed., *The Golden Book of Tagore* (Calcutta: Golden Book Committee, 1931). The latter assembles a range of contributors for his seventieth birthday volume.

94. Benedict Anderson had proposed the concept of the imagined community of print capitalism as a component of modern nationalism; I extend the notion of print culture to the global scene to explain cosmopolitanism. The members of this community will never know most of their fellow members. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

95. The exception was Rabindranath Tagore who was widely traveled. The other cosmopolitan was the polyglot essayist Nirad C. Chaudhuri (1897–1999), whose intellectual development took place in a remote town in colonial Bengal. One of the sites of such negotiations of modernity was the *adda*, which was a cross between leisurely intellectual

This content downloaded from
200.144.202.53 on Mon, 14 Mar 2022 17:37:01 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

conversation and local gossip among close friends in tea shops, cafés, and other meeting places, similar in spirit to the French café culture. Dipesh Chakrabarty, "*Adda*: A History of Sociality," in *Provincialising Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 180, speaks of the practice "as a struggle to be at home in modernity." I would add that the *addas* were the sites in Calcutta and other parts of colonial Bengal where virtual cosmopolites flourished in an atmosphere that enabled them to sharpen their intellect.

96. Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in Global Cultural Economy," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 324–39.

97. Mercer, *Cosmopolitan Modernisms*, 9.

98. Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), xv.

99. Abbas, "Cosmopolitan De-scriptions," 770, quotes both authors. See Luis Buñuel, *My Last Sigh*, trans. Abigail Israel (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), 221; and Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths*, ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (New York: New Directions, 1964), 184.

100. James Clifford, "Mixed Feelings," in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 362–65, quoted in Mercer, *Cosmopolitan Modernisms*, 11.

101. Arjun Appadurai, "Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination (Globalization from Below)," *Public Culture* 12, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 15–18, speaks the role of nongovernmental organizations in the process, but this could also be a useful way to think of the colonial intelligentsia.

102. Sheldon Pollock observes that "if we conceive of the practice of cosmopolitanism in literary communication that travels far, indeed, without any obstruction from any boundaries at all, and, more important, that thinks of itself as unbounded, unobstructed, unlocated . . . the world of writers and readers that Sanskrit produced, on the one hand, and Latin, on the other, are remarkably similar." What is interesting about his comment is that this cosmopolitanism in the ancient world was a product of sharing a common language, though admittedly these were languages of powerful cultures. Pollock, "Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History," *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 599.

103. Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism*, traces the work and achievements of these pioneering Indian artists who introduced modernism to India.

104. Edward W. Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered," in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 203. Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *La mentalité primitive* (Paris: PUF, 1922), proposed the notion of the "primitive mind" as the prerational stage of the modern mind, which was also Sigmund Freud's belief.

105. See Susan Hiller, ed., *The Myth of Primitivism: Perspectives on Art* (London: Routledge, 1991), esp. Hiller's excellent introduction and persuasive chapters by Daniel Miller and Rasheed Araeen. This penetrating work lays bare the hegemonic aspects of colonial primitivism.

106. Homi K. Bhabha, "The Other Question," *Screen* 24, no. 6 (November–December 1983): 18–36.

107. This is movingly and candidly expressed by Hiller, *The Myth of Primitivism*, 2. See also Michael Leja's trenchant critique of the failings of European primitivism including André Breton's admission of the West's ultimate failure to integrate the Other, in *Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

108. Foster, "Primitive Scenes," *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 1 (Autumn 1993): 71–72.

109. F. Pellizzi, "Anthropology and Primitivism," *Res* 44 (Autumn 2003): 8–9. Much work has been done in tracing the complex role of primitivism in modern European art. See the pioneering work by Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Painting* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938); Rubin, *"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art*; and Rhodes, *Primitivism and Modern Art*. For a useful summary, see Partha Mitter, "Primitivism," in *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology*, ed. David Levinson and Melvin Ember (New York: Henry Holt, 1996), vol. 3, 1029–32. On its impact on art, see Gill Perry et al., *Primitivism, Cubism and Abstraction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

110. On the paradox of primitivism inspiring African American modernism, see Sieglinde Lemke, *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

111. Zhang Xianglong, "Heidegger's View of Language and the Lao-Zhuang Fao-Language," trans. S. C. Angle, in *Chinese Philosophy in an Era of Globalization*, ed. Robin R. Wang (New York: State University of New York Press, 2004). See Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language* (New York, 1982). I am in Joel Kupperman's debt for the reference.

112. The primitivist critique of civilization went back to the ancient Greeks and Romans but returned with added force in the colonial period. George Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore, 1948); and Arthur O. Lovejoy and G. Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

113. Mahatma Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* (Ahmedabad: Navajwan, 1938). One of the influences on his primitivism was John Ruskin, a great critic of Western industrial capitalism. Unlike Gandhi, Marx did not question the teleological foundations of Western ideology in his critique of capitalism.

114. Pan, *The Primitive Renaissance*, on whose excellent work my arguments are based here.

115. The section on Roy in Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism*, which seeks to establish this artist's importance, discusses this.

116. On the rise of artistic individualism in India, see Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India*, 79–119, 179–218.

117. On Hausenstein, see above at n. 57.

118. Pan, *The Primitive Renaissance*, 5. Pan's analysis of the German primitivists shows clear parallels between them and Roy, even though they were ignorant of one another.

119. Indian artists were by no means the only ones to valorize primitivism. Wifredo Lam, the Cuban artist of Chinese, African, and Spanish ancestry who "nationalized" primitivism, offered a critique of colonialism by combining Western primitivist aesthetics with contemporary African elements. His Afro-Cuban themes were a form of political assertion. Sims, *Wifredo Lam*. On African American modernism, see Lemke, *Primitivist Modernism*.

120. Lemke, *Primitivist Modernism*, 5, 16.

121. See Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India*, chaps. 1, 2.

This content downloaded from
200.144.202.53 on Mon, 14 Mar 2022 17:37:01 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms